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ABSTRACT

This report presents selected preliminary findings for the Center for Equal Opportunity's undergraduate admissions project for the University of California, Berkeley, 1993-1995. It describes the racial and ethnic composition of Berkeley enrollees and racial and ethnic differences in Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores and grade point averages. The report also describes in detail the procedures used to generate these results. There is a greater degree of racial preference in the admissions process at Berkeley than is usually assumed. Three enrollee data sets were obtained from the university, with information for each enrollee for the applicant's racial and ethnic groups, high school grade point average (GPA), SAT math and verbal scores, and best achievement test scores. At Berkeley, no single racial and ethnic group was a majority of enrollees, but Asian Americans represented 40.9% of the entering class, Whites were 32.8%, and 17.1% were Hispanics. African Americans comprised 7.2% of enrollees and American Indians, 2%. The Berkeley data show substantial differences in enrollee qualifications among ethnic groups, including differences in SAT verbal and mathematics scores, and in high school GPA. There were small differences between White and Asian American enrollees. In contrast, the differences between White and Asian enrollees and African American enrollees are so substantial as to suggest that these groups of enrollees are selected from entirely distinct academic populations. The gaps between White and Asian American enrollees and Hispanic enrollees are smaller, although they are still substantial. For every variable, a distinct rank order of ethnic group performance emerges. Asian Americans or Whites are at the top, with Asian Americans scoring higher than Whites in SAT math scores and high school GPAs. These two groups are always followed by American Indians, who generally score higher than Hispanics, except for GPAs. African Americans consistently have the lowest scores. The analysis indicates that a massive degree of racial preference in admissions policy exists at Berkeley. (SLD)

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Racial Preferences at U.C. Berkeley

Racial Preferences in Undergraduate Enrollment at the University of California, Berkeley, 1993-1995: A Preliminary Report, Revised Edition

by
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Prepared for the
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Introduction

This report presents selected preliminary findings for the Center for Equal Opportunity's undergraduate admissions project for the University of California, Berkeley, 1993-1995. It describes the racial and ethnic composition of Berkeley enrollees, and racial and ethnic differences in SAT scores and grade point averages. The report also describes in detail the procedures used to generate these results. There is a greater degree of racial preference in the admissions process at Berkeley than is usually assumed.

Procedures for Analysis

As of now, we have obtained from the University of California, Berkeley three enrollee data sets, with information for each individual enrollee for the same seven variables listed above: the applicant's racial and ethnic group; high school grade-point average; SAT math score; SAT verbal score; best math achievement test score; best English achievement test score; and best third achievement test score. The data consist of a file of enrollees, for each of the years 1993, 1994, and 1995, which we have transformed into SPSS-PC for Windows 3.1 system files. We created composite SAT indexes, ethnic group frequencies, and average scores of enrollees for each variable for all three years of data.

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Results

A. Racial and Ethnic Composition of Enrollees.

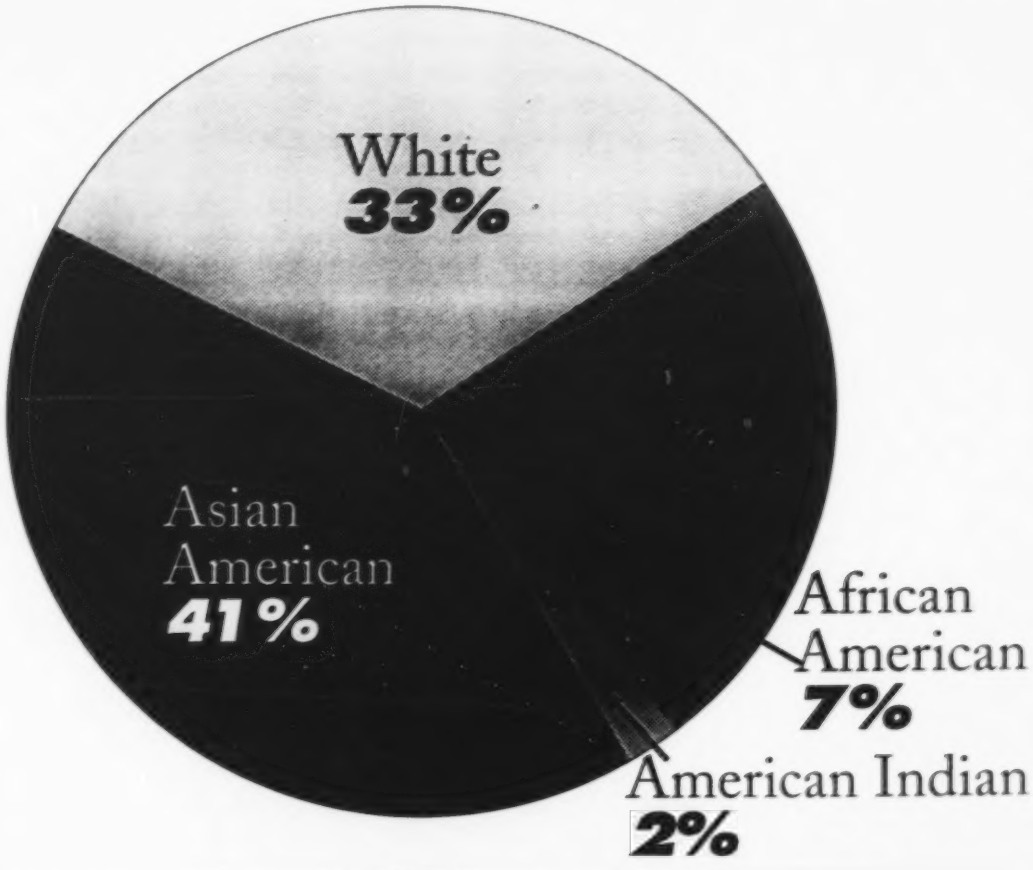
The racial and ethnic composition of the entering freshman class at Berkeley remained nearly identical for all three years. No single racial or ethnic group was a majority of enrollees.

Chart 1 reveals that in 1995, Asian Americans were 40.9 percent of the entering class. Whites made up 32.8 percent and 17.1 percent were Hispanics. African Americans comprised 7.2 percent of the enrollees, and American Indians, 2 percent.

The proportions were roughly the same in 1993 and 1994. For 1993, Asian Americans were 43 percent of the entering class. Thirty-two percent of the freshman class were white, while 18 percent were Hispanic, 6 percent African-American, and 1 percent American Indian. For 1994, Asian

Chart 1

Racial and Ethnic Composition, Berkeley Freshman Class, 1995 (N=3102)



Americans were 44 percent and whites were 32 percent of enrollees. Sixteen percent of enrollees were Hispanic, seven percent were African American, and one percent was American Indian.

B. Racial and Ethnic Differences in Enrollee Scores.

The Berkeley data show substantial differences in enrollee qualifications among ethnic groups, including differences in SAT verbal scores, SAT math scores, and in high school grade-point averages (GPAs).

Method of Statistical Analysis

Ordinary statistical analysis rests on the normal bell-shaped curve. In the Berkeley enrollee data sets, the distributions of SAT math and verbal scores and of GPAs are so asymmetrical (i.e., skewed) as to be significantly different from the standard bell-shaped curve.

Because of the asymmetry of the data, reporting means for SAT math and verbal scores and GPAs places greater weight on extreme values than is warranted. A few unusually high or low scores can have a substantial effect on the value of the mean. Standard deviations, which are based on squared deviations from the mean, are even more useless for describing the spread of cases for asymmetrical, badly skewed distributions, because they reflect the (mathematical) square of these extreme values (e.g., Hartwig and Dearing, 1979).

We describe the Berkeley data using medians and interquartile ranges for each racial and ethnic group. The median represents the middle of the distribution. At the median, 50 percent of all cases have greater scores, and 50 percent have lesser scores. The median is not affected by the values of extreme cases.

Instead of means and standard deviations, then, we report scores at the medians (50th percentiles) and the interquartile ranges (25th and 75th percentiles) to describe the distribution of scores. These are less susceptible to the influence of extreme values and more adequately represent the properties of the bulk of the cases (e.g., Hartwig and Dearing, 1979).

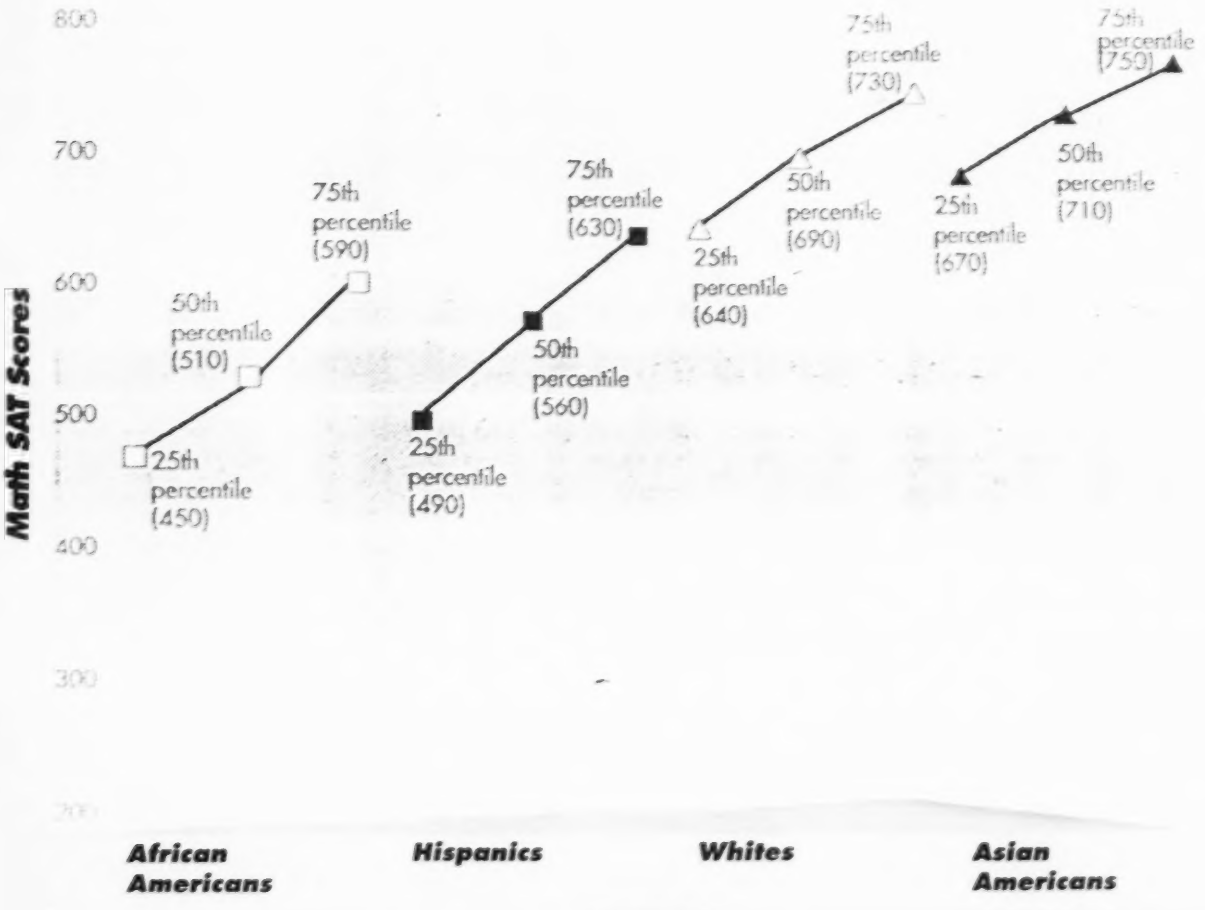
We computed medians and interquartile ranges for each of the ethnic groups on the following variables: SAT Verbal Scores, SAT Math Scores, and high school GPAs. Scores at the 25th percentile mean that 75 percent of the group had scores higher than that score, while 25 percent had lower scores. The 75th percentile score is the point at which 25 percent of the group had higher scores, and 75 percent had lower scores.

Math SAT Scores

Chart 2 displays the math SAT scores of 1995 Berkeley enrollees at the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles for each racial and ethnic group. The median is the 50th percentile for each racial and ethnic group. For 1993, 1994, and 1995, the rank-order of racial and ethnic groups from highest to lowest percentile scores is the same. Asian Americans have the highest scores at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentile, followed by whites, American Indians, Hispanics, and African Americans. In addition, the SAT math score differences between African Americans and Hispanics as compared to Asian Americans and whites were substantial. They were so large that for all three years, the 75th percentile scores for African Americans were less than the 25th percentile scores for Asian Americans and whites. They form two separate and distinct populations, with little overlap in scores. The Hispanic scores differ only slightly less.

Chart 2

Berkeley Enrollees, 1995 Math SAT Scores



Verbal SAT Scores

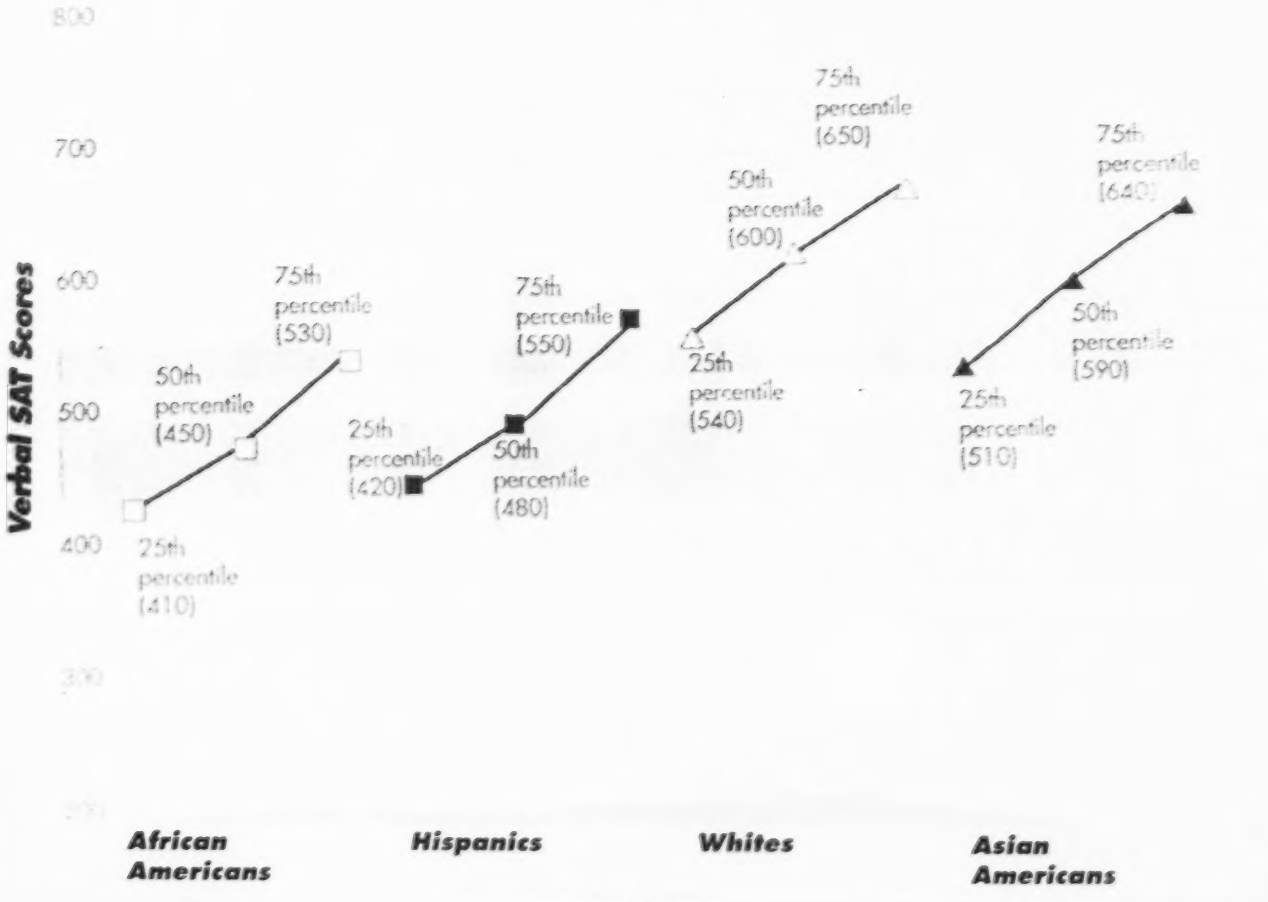
Chart 3 shows the verbal SAT scores of 1995 Berkeley enrollees for each racial and ethnic group. They follow a pattern similar to that of SAT math scores, but the differences among the racial and ethnic groups are somewhat more modest. Nevertheless, there are differences among whites and Asian Americans versus African Americans and Hispanics, and they exist for 1993 and 1994 as well.

The highest quartile, or 75th percentile score for African Americans is almost equal to the lowest quartile, or 25th percentile score for whites and Asian Americans. In 1995, the score for the top quartile among African Americans fell between the 25th and 50th percentile score for Asian Americans; it is almost equal to the score at the lowest quartile (25 percentile) for whites. In 1994, the 75th percentile score for African Americans is slightly less than or equal to the 25th percentile score for Asian Americans and whites respectively. In 1993, the scores at the 75 percentile for African Americans are equal to or greater than the 25th percentile scores for Asian Americans and whites respectively.

In other words, the groups overlap somewhat. The top 25 percent of African-American enrollees

Chart 3

Berkeley Enrollees, 1995 Verbal SAT Scores



performed the same or better than 25 percent of whites and Asian Americans on the SAT verbal test. However, 50 percent of white and Asian American enrollees still did better than 75 percent of African Americans on the SAT verbal test.

Hispanic SAT verbal scores are somewhat higher. The gap between their SAT verbal scores and white and Asian-American scores are smaller than that between African Americans and these same groups. In all three years, the top quartile (i.e., the 75th percentile) of Hispanic scores fall between the 25th and 50th percentiles of Asian Americans and whites. That is, the top 25 percent of Hispanic enrollees perform somewhere between the lowest 25 percent and 50 percent of Asian-American and white enrollees on the verbal SAT.

High-School Grade-Point Averages (GPAs)

Similar racial and ethnic group differences are found for high school GPAs. The bottom quartile (25th percentile) GPA for Asian-American enrollees for 1993, 1994, and 1995 was 4.00. This means that at least three out of four Asian-American enrollees have a 4.00 GPA. White scores are slightly lower. Between 50 and 75 percent of whites also have GPAs of 4.00, while the lowest quartile GPA was about 3.8.

There is little overlap in GPAs between African Americans and whites and Asian Americans respectively. The 75 percentile GPA for African Americans in the same years is less than the lowest quartile score for Asian Americans and whites. African American GPAs at the 75th percentile were 3.77 in 1993, 3.78 in 1994, and 3.76 in 1995.

There is considerably more overlap between GPAs of Asian Americans and whites compared to Hispanics. The 75th percentile of Hispanic enrollees was 4.00 in 1994 and 1995, and 3.96 in 1993, which was the same as the interquartile range (25th through 75th percentile) for Asian Americans, and the median and top quartile (50th and 75 percentile) of whites. In other words, 25 percent of Hispanic enrollees did as well as 75 percent of Asian Americans and 50 percent of whites.

Half of the Hispanic enrollees, however, did more poorly in high school than 75 percent of Asian Americans and whites—Hispanic scores at the median and lowest quartile are lower than the scores for Asian Americans and whites at the 25th percentile.

Summary

Racial and ethnic group differences on all three measures of academic performance—the SAT math scores, the SAT verbal scores, and high school GPAs—show similar kinds of differences among enrollees. There are small differences between Asian-American and white enrollees. In contrast, the differences in prior academic performances between either whites or Asian Americans, and African Americans are so substantial as to suggest that these groups of enrollees are selected from entirely distinct academic populations. The gaps between white and Asian-American enrollees and Hispanic enrollees are smaller, although they are still substantial.

For every variable in every year, a distinct rank order of ethnic group performance emerges. Asian Americans or whites are at the top, with Asian Americans scoring higher than whites in SAT math tests and high school GPAs, and whites scoring higher than Asian Americans in SAT verbal tests. These two groups are always followed by American Indians who generally score higher than Hispanics, except for GPAs. African Americans consistently have the lowest scores.

Based on our analysis, we conclude that a massive degree of racial preference in admissions policy exists at Berkeley.

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